

## HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

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FHBRO Number 96-24

DFRP Number 32086

### **Recognized Federal Heritage Building**

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia

### **Casemates**

Fort McNab, Halifax Defence Complex

The Casemates structure is comprised of seven contiguous casemates. It was constructed between 1888 and 1892 as the first permanent accommodation at Fort McNab. The casemates structure was designed by the Royal Engineers. In 1919, it was converted to an electrical power generating plant, and water cooling tanks, engines, dynamos and oil tanks were installed in the four southern casemates. Three casemates contained coal, gas and general stores. The original arrangement of three bays, each comprising a central door with transom and flanking windows, has been altered. The building has remained unused since Fort McNab was closed in 1960. The Casemates structure is now part of Fort McNab National Historic Site. The custodian is Parks Canada.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The Casemates structure has been designated “Recognized” because of its historical, architectural and environmental significance.

#### **Historical Significance**

As an essential facility for the support and maintenance of Fort McNab, the Casemates structure is indirectly associated with the defence of Canada between 1888 and 1960. Fort McNab was established in 1888-92 as a key component of the fortification system which defended Halifax Harbour and the Imperial naval station. It remained in active military use until after the Second World War. The Casemates structure was constructed in 1888 to accommodate non-commissioned officers’ quarters, men’s barracks, a boiler house and coal store, a canteen, a cookhouse and an ablution room. It was briefly used as artillery stores from 1902. In 1919 it was converted to an electrical power generating plant and continued in this capacity for an unknown period.

#### **Architectural Significance**

The Casemates is a long, one-storey concrete structure composed of seven vaulted bays. The original arrangement of each bay, comprised of a central door with a transom, flanking windows, and a round-headed, recessed concrete panel, is typical of casemate design of the Royal Engineers. This original arrangement is extant in four bays. The vaulted construction is visible within each bay.

#### **Environmental Significance**

The Casemates structure is positioned within the fort so as to reduce its visibility from the harbour. The structure is embedded in the central earth mound of the fort, so that only the front elevation is visible within the fort.

### **Character-defining Elements**

The heritage character of the Casemates structure resides in the following character-defining elements:

- Its multiple-bay construction of seven contiguous casemates and the arrangement of openings in each bay, comprising a central door with transom and flanking windows, set within a round-headed, recessed concrete panel.
- The concrete construction and vaulted interior.
- Its location within the embankment of the central earth mound, so that only its front elevation is visible.

All maintenance and repair work, as well as future interventions, should aim to respect these character-defining elements.

For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.